



# Arthritis Fact Sheet

## What is Arthritis?

The term "arthritis" includes more than 100 diseases and conditions affecting joints and other tissues. Arthritis and other rheumatic conditions include: osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, spondyloarthritis, Lyme arthritis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis, gout, systemic lupus erythematosus, vasculitis, myositis, and many other disorders. About 28 percent of women and 19 percent of men in Maryland have some form of arthritis.

If you have pain, aching, swelling or stiffness in or around a joint that has been present for at least two weeks, you could have arthritis. See your doctor to find out.

## Risk Factors for Arthritis

- **Being female:** Women make up nearly 60 percent of arthritis cases.
- **Older age:** More than half of Maryland adults age 65 and over have arthritis. Risk increases with age.
- **Family history:** Certain genes are associated with a higher risk of some types of arthritis.
- **Lyme disease:** About 60 percent of patients with untreated Lyme disease will develop Lyme arthritis.
- **Obesity:** Obesity is linked to gout in men and osteoarthritis of the knee, hip and hand in women.
- **Joint injuries:** Sports injuries, work-related injuries and repetitive use joint injuries can increase the risk of arthritis.
- **Occupation:** Farming, heavy industry, and other jobs requiring repetitive motion are associated with arthritis.

## Effective Treatments for Arthritis

- **Take a class.** The Arthritis Foundation Walk With Ease program teaches participants how to safely make physical activity a part of their everyday life. Those

who complete the program report improved strength and balance, and decreased pain.

- **Get some physical activity.** Regular, moderate exercise keeps joints healthy, improves function, reduces joint swelling and improves energy levels. The Arthritis Foundation offers an exercise program and an aquatic program. Both are proven to reduce arthritis symptoms. To learn more about Arthritis Foundation classes, call 1-800-365-3811, or visit the web site at [www.arthritis.org/maryland.resources](http://www.arthritis.org/maryland.resources)
- **Lose weight.** Weight loss has been shown to improve symptoms such as pain, stiffness and function in overweight patients.
- **Try physical or occupational therapy.** These can help reduce activity limitations.
- **Learn about medication options.** Some arthritis medicines can slow the progression of the disease, control symptoms and prevent serious complications.
- **Consider joint replacement.** This surgical solution often reduces pain and improves activity. Ask your doctor if joint replacement could be right for you.

## The Maryland State Advisory Council on Arthritis and Related Diseases

The goal of the Council is to reduce the burden of arthritis in Maryland. The Council promotes arthritis self-help classes, collects and analyzes data about arthritis in Maryland, distributes arthritis resources to health care providers, and promotes public awareness of arthritis. The 15-member, governor-appointed Council meets quarterly at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 201 West Preston Street, Baltimore.

For more information about the Council, including upcoming meeting dates, contact Tara Snyder, Council Coordinator, at 410-767-4189, or by email at [tara.snyder@maryland.gov](mailto:tara.snyder@maryland.gov)